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Interdisciplinarity in vocational guidance: an action theory perspective

Ladislav Valach · Richard A. Young

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Abstract In addressing the issue of interdisciplinary research in vocational guidance, twelve propositions important for understanding the vocational guidance process as joint, goal-directed action are presented. They address the encounter between client and counsellor leading to relational ethics, the relevance of everyday action theory and methods for the analysis of goal-directed processes as joint actions, projects, and careers. Research on the school-to-work transition illustrates this conceptualisation and analysis. Links to other disciplines concerned with vocational guidance are identified.

Résumé. **Interdisciplinarité en orientation professionnelle: la perspective de la théorie de l'action.** En abordant la question de la recherche interdisciplinaire en orientation professionnelle, on présente douze propositions importantes pour comprendre le processus d'orientation professionnelle comme action conjointe dirigée vers un but. Elles concernent la rencontre entre le client et le conseiller menant à une éthique de la relation, la pertinence de la théorie de l'action quotidienne et les méthodes pour l'analyse des processus dirigés vers un but comme actions, projets et carrières en liaison les uns avec les autres. La recherche sur la transition école-travail illustre cette conceptualisation et cette analyse. Des liens avec d'autres disciplines concernées par l'orientation professionnelle sont identifiés.

Zusammenfassung. **Interdisziplinarität in der Beruflichen Beratung: Ein Entwurf einer Aktionstheorie.** Das Thema der interdisziplinären Forschung in der Berufsberatung ansprechend, werden zwölf grundlegende Aussagen vorgestellt, die

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bedeutsam für das Verständnis des Berufsberatungsprozesses als eines gemeinsamen, zielgerichteten Handelns sind. Angesprochen wird die Begegnung von Klient und Berater, was zu Fragen der relationalen Ethik dieser Beziehung führt, sowie die Relevanz der Handlungstheorie und ihrer Methoden für die Analyse von zielorientierten Prozessen als gemeinsame Handlungen, Projekte und Laufbahnen. Untersuchungen zum Übergang Schule-Beruf illustrieren diese Konzeptualisierung und Analyse. Schnittstellen zu anderen Fachbereichen, die mit Berufsberatung befasst sind, werden aufgezeigt.

Resumen. Interdisciplinariedad en la Orientación Vocacional: una perspectiva desde la Teoría de la Acción. Al abordar el tema de la investigación interdisciplinar en la orientación vocacional, se presentan doce proposiciones importantes para entender el proceso de la orientación vocacional desde la acción conjunta y orientada a las metas. Estas abarcan el encuentro entre cliente y orientando que lleva a la ética de las relaciones, la relevancia de una teoría de la acción cotidiana y de los métodos para el análisis de procesos dirigidos como acciones conjuntas, proyectos y carreras. Se ejemplifica esta conceptualización y análisis a través de investigaciones sobre la transición escuela-trabajo. Se identifican asimismo los vínculos con otras disciplinas relacionadas con la orientación vocacional.

Keywords Vocational guidance · School-work transition · Action theory

The issue of interdisciplinary cooperation is very important in vocational guidance as neither clients nor the vocational world are neatly organized within the boundaries of particular professional disciplines. Vocational guidance does not identify fully with psychology, sociology, education, or psychotherapy. Nevertheless, many issues about the interdisciplinary nature of vocational guidance have not been fully addressed. Thus, the aim of this article is to consider the very basic but decisive question of the conceptual nature of vocational guidance and the disciplines that contribute to it. Specifically, we suggest that the basic assumptions about human behaviour made in the disciplines that contribute to vocational guidance should be studied before interdisciplinarity is proposed or assumed. In this article, we undertake to elucidate some of these basic assumptions, and then discuss their application to the specific vocational issue of the school-work transition. The assumptions adopted in this article speak to the nature of vocational guidance interventions as well as the research processes used to study them.

The distancing versus identifying dilemma

With the appearance of pictures of the earth taken from satellites, a new view of the earth became part of people's shared images of the earth and the societies inhabiting it. This new view might have intensified human responsibility for the earth and its climate, but it also provided a distant view of human beings. It was like a research scientist, who by maintaining distance from his or her research topic, can see the

lawfulness of its behaviour. In the satellite's image of the earth, humans, human behaviour, and societal processes appear to be an order of lawful causalities. This is a conceptualization often associated with modern science. But it also is very much alive in practical research and evaluative procedures of many disciplines and approaches in which the researchers distance themselves from the subject of inquiry, as in the positivist tradition.

The consequence of this option for the research process can be drastically represented in the classic image of a scientific inquiry in which the focus of the inquiry is close spatially but distant psychologically. Here one assumes a clear division between the subject and the object of the study. This approach is analogous to a surgery—the researcher being the surgeon, the focus of inquiry being the patient's body. However, many guidance counsellors would agree that this is neither the typical nor desirable vocational guidance situation.

In contrast to the strict subject-object distinction of traditional science, participative or action research (Checkland & Holwell, 1998) provides another picture of inquiry. Here the subject-object distinction is dissolved. Change is initiated by the researcher who acts as an *agent provocateur*. Action research is based on the assumption that monitoring alone, whether for political or epistemological reasons, is not satisfactory. Change is what is expected. Action research further argues that independent inquiry is not possible. The result is that when researchers engage themselves in purposeful activities, even for laudatory reasons, they are able to call it research. In a very simplified way, it could be said that the action research paradigm maintains that monitoring is not enough and change is important, or that independent inquiry is not possible and that, as we cannot help but intervene in the target processes, we as researchers can well engage in a purposeful change while declaring that we are conducting research.

Some vocational guidance professionals might be dissatisfied with this dilemma of distancing from versus identifying with the focus of inquiry. They may feel that in counselling their task is more reflective of joining in, listening to people, working with the clients' goals, and not imposing on their clients a particular view of the world. Contextual action theory of career (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002) agrees with the latter position. The authors' view is that counsellors informed by contextual action theory join their clients in their ongoing actions and projects.

Based on the primacy that this joining with the client represents in counselling, particular disciplines involved in the interdisciplinarity of vocational counselling need to be asked how they see the client-counsellor relationship, or the researcher-participant relationship in the case of research studies in vocational counselling.

Twelve action theory propositions for vocational guidance

The central point of the contextual action theory conceptualization as presented here suggests that (1) the practitioner-client encounter is the root we base our further theorizing on. We then suggest that (2) a relational conceptualization is required, which we follow with the proposition that (3) a relational ethics should be employed. This position serves as a reason for stressing (4) the relevance of everyday thinking in

our work in which we identify (5) the client's naive or ordinary action theory as the most important. We also suggest that (6) everyday action theory should be integrated in the professional conceptualization used in counselling. This also is because (7) everyday action theory is rooted in social representations which are monitored in naive observation. Then we indicate that (8) social representation nests subjective cognitive-emotional processes which we monitor in the self-confrontation interview. The next method discussed is (9) systematic observation including subjective and social views. (10) The conceptualization we propose distinguishes among actions, projects and careers as forms of goal directed processes. We further propose that (11) these are joint processes. The final point briefly describes (12) how we study school-work transitions and which disciplines could support us.

1. The counsellor's meeting with a client is the most important point of departure for any further reasoning and conceptualizing about counselling and guidance. It is not a subject-object confrontation; rather, it is a relational event that is jointly constructed between counsellor and client.

This proposition might sound obvious or even trivial. But it sounds less trivial if we consider that this point of departure is different from those adhered to in classical and mainstream conceptualizations of guidance. There the points of departure are either dictated by the "true nature" of the object of inquiry, as provided by, for example, the trait-and-factor approach (Chartrand, 1991), or by the methodological rules, as described in test assessment or epistemological propositions. However, as Holland (1996) maintained "When they seek counseling, clients do not show up asking for maturity inventories or wanting to know the implications of their life stage" (p. 5). The encounter of the vocational guidance counsellor with the client is a joint-goal directed process in which, through a relational process, their social reality is jointly constructed. Obviously, this construction is not based on a personal and social *tabula rasa*. Rather this construction uses all available resources, while not considering these resources as the causes of future actions. Further, and also importantly, the encounter with the client is much more than an opportunity for the counsellor to apply his or her skills.

The encounter between client and counsellor is well represented in the relational approach. It provides the basis for conceptualizing the ontology, epistemology, and ethics of vocational guidance practice. The relational approach can be recognized as a paradigm (see the discussion on the requirements of a paradigm by Cottone (2007)). Thus, the relational approach can be used in further reasoning and conceptualization about vocational guidance.

It would be very helpful if our future interdisciplinary involvement dealt with the question about the role of professional-client encounter in the other disciplines in question.

2. The relational conceptualization of vocational counselling, based on the relational paradigm (ontology, epistemology, ethics), is a key issue in career theory and practice.

The relational paradigm stresses relationship as the point of departure in theorizing and research, be it as a unit of analysis, unit of ontological consideration,

epistemological process, or generally the role of relationship and social processes in our lives. The relational conceptualization includes the view that relationships are central to human functioning, and that relational life is intertwined throughout our lives (Blustein, 2001). This conceptualization is well represented in contemporary guidance literature, but less so in practice and in methods used in empirical research (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004; Schultheiss, 2003). Vocational psychology has explored the relevance of relationships in career, with family, parents, other family members—such as siblings and extended family (Schultheiss, Palma, Predragovich, & Glasscock, 2002; Young et al., 2006). Emotionally and instrumentally supportive teachers, counsellors, and significant others also provide relational environments that facilitate career (Schultheiss, Palma, & Manzi, 2005).

The relational conceptualization is often discussed as relationship being an important part of human life and as an anthropological precondition of any further development (Blustein, 2006), but the relational paradigm has more to offer. Specifically, relational ontology (Slife, 2004) indicates that it is not an element, such as a perceptual object, which should be made a starting point of our inquiry. Rather it is the relationship between such elements that is ontologically meaningful and, therefore, of primary relevance to build upon. Even more, “(r)elationships are not just the interactions of what was originally nonrelational; relationships are relational ‘all the way down.’...Each thing, including each person, is first and always a nexus of relations.” (p. 159). Relational epistemology (Thayer-Bacon, 1997) reminds us that it is not the copy of the objects “in there” which qualifies the epistemological process but the relationship constructed in the process of gaining knowledge, the relationship in inquiry, the what happens between those involved in the epistemological process traditionally seen as subject and object (Gergen, 1994).

The proponents of the contextual action theory approach would very much welcome if the questions of whether and how interdisciplinary cooperation adhere to the relational conceptualization were answered in interdisciplinary work in vocational guidance.

3. Relational ethics are accessible and can be applied to vocational counselling.

Relational ontology and epistemology are complex and complicated propositions discussed in philosophy (Mills, 2005; Wachtel, 2002). It would be difficult to ask vocational guidance professionals to wait until these problems are solved before they could use a relational conceptualization in their work. Nevertheless, relational ethics are accessible to everyone. They are also relevant, as most counsellors want to pursue ethical conduct in their practice. In the view of relational ethics, relationships are varied and are nurtured and sustained by their reliance on dialogue and mutual concern. It is the relationship itself that supports and informs ethical reflection and decision making (Cottone, 2004).

In the contextual approach to family therapy (Böszörményi-Nagy, 1987), the ethical or “justice” dimension—that is, the relational ethics—of close relationships is emphasized. The roles of caring, connectedness, loyalty, guilt, fairness, accountability, and trustworthiness—within and between generations are stressed. It sees relational ethics as having a basis derived from relationships with concrete consequences, that is, as distinct from abstract or “value” ethics, and as being

explanatory of the motivational dynamics operating in individuals, families, social groups, and the broader society. As Fisher (2006) noted,

Relational ethics view scientist and participant alike as moral agents joined in partnership to construct research goals and procedures that produce knowledge carrying social value and scientific validity. In viewing autonomy as a social construction, it proposes that respect for personhood must be rooted in scientist-participant dialogues aimed at discovering shared and unshared values in a process of mutual influencing through which fair and caring ethical procedures are derived. (no page number)

Relational ethics are not based on self-interest or simply on the consequences of our action. They suggest that our actions, which are good for the other person in the relationship, as indicated in the encounter by the other person, are ethical and good. This applies equally to relationships and encounters in counselling and research. The authors of the contextual action theory would consider it helpful if the propositions of the disciplines participating in interdisciplinary projects were compatible with the relational ethics in order to adhere similar assumptions facilitating joint efforts.

4. In observing this ethic, vocational counsellors respect the everyday thinking of their clients.

Relational ethics do not reduce our respect for clients' basic needs, but, rather, take clients seriously, including helping clients with their perception of their goals. This is particularly the case for clients' identity goals which reflect their emotions—virtually every therapist and counsellor subscribe to addressing identity goals and emotion. However, respecting clients' everyday thinking and emotions can go further in helping to revise the scientific and professional thinking which is often in opposition to everyday thinking. There are a number of well-developed theoretical approaches addressing this issue which also provide a reasonable evidence base for further conceptualization. For example, the theory of mind approach (Carruthers & Smith, 1996), attribution theory (Newtonson & Enquist, 1976), naïve or common sense psychology (Heider, 1958), phenomenology guided research (Ashworth, 2003), sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1979), research on narratives (Polkinghorne, 1988), and a number of studies in cultural anthropology, among others, deal with everyday thinking and stimulated a large body of empirical research. Again, the contextual action theory informed practitioners would ask: Do the interdisciplinary project participants adhere to everyday thinking?

5. This everyday thinking is client's naïve or ordinary action theory.

This “everyday thinking” view implies recognizing that it includes thinking in terms of goals. People consider their own and others' behaviour as goal-directed. Goal-directed thinking is decisive for meaning making as one observes and organizes one's own ongoing behaviour (von Cranach & Valach, 1983). Goal-directed thinking is central to an everyday or naïve action theory (Heider, 1958). Consequently, in any encounter with the client, an everyday or naïve action theory is likely to be used by the participants and others as well (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987).

While everyday or naïve action theory is operational in describing and organizing action, it is not necessarily a reliable way to explain action or to make higher order inferences. The layperson's description of the goals of a couple preparing a meal can be integrated into systematic observation, but not their suggestion about why the couple is doing it. Thus, when people describe their own or someone else behaviour in terms of actions assuming a goal for certain behaviour, we can take these conventions for granted. However, when people attempt to explain why certain results were achieved, they do not typically provide sufficient information for theory building based on that behaviour. Recognizing this, we have to pay attention to the issue of devising methods for empirical analysis. To ensure adequate cooperation, the authors of the contextual action theory approach would ask: How do other disciplines conceptualize subjective experience in the vocational guidance process? In order to account for this thinking in our interventions, theorizing, and empirical analysis, we have to go a step further which we can illustrate in the following example of school-work transition.

6. Everyday action theory needs to be integrated in the conceptualizing and research of school-work transition and career.

This proposition can be illustrated by a contextual action theory informed conceptualisation of school-work transition, of the school-work transition guidance (intervention), and of school-work transition project as well as the whole career (empirical analysis). The methods described below are depicted in the Figure 1. We also scrutinize the research methodology of the cooperating disciplines to determine whether their approaches are compatible with this systematic observation method and integrate their data and results according to the framework provided by our method of systematic observation.

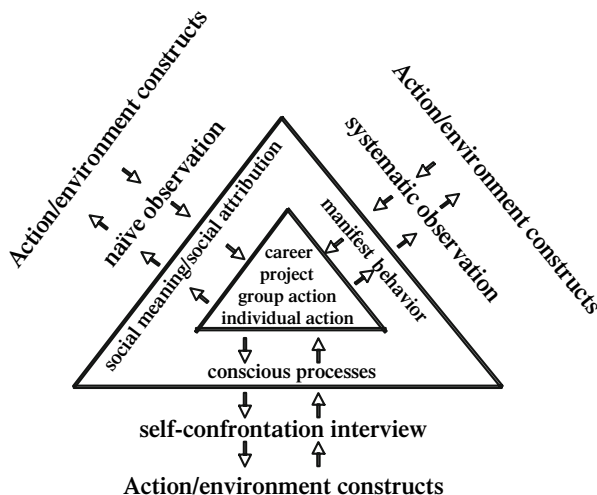


Figure 1 Methods of the analysis of goal-directed processes (from Valach, Young, and Lynam (2002, p. 18). Copyright by Ladislav Valach, Richard A. Young, and M. Judy Lynam. Reprinted with permission)

7. Everyday action theory is a part of social representations, which can be reflected in naïve observation.

When studying naïve action theory in a nomothetic way, action theory researchers are not establishing a natural law but outlining a current perceptual convention rooted in shared social beliefs. This process has been conceptualized as social representation (Moscovici, 1981). Thus, the conceptualization of naïve action theory is culturally anchored and must be considered a part of empirical analysis. The best way to go about such empirical analysis is to include naïve observation in applied methods. As one is, in such a case, dealing with a conceptualization which possesses social roots, one can expect that social groups might differ in their description of an ongoing behaviour. For example, different social groups might stress different concepts in their everyday theory of action, such as certain feelings or degree of persistence. The most common procedure is asking members of certain communication communities to describe, in a systematic way, specific ongoing behaviour of interest presented either live or in video recordings. The researchers can also ask them to indicate certain functions such as a beginning and an end of certain meaningful units. Using this method, the researchers can also see it as a procedure for capturing and describing indigenous and culturally sensitive psychological and vocational guidance theories (Young, Marshall, & Valach, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to realize that social representations are key roots for personal and scientific knowledge. This should, preferably, also be reflected in interdisciplinary projects in vocational guidance.

8. As social representations impact on the subjective cognitive-emotional processes of individuals, the data on subjective processes should be collected by methods based on a similar conceptualization.

Social representations are, first of all, the origin of individual cognitive-emotional processes (von Cranach & Valach, 1983), but there is more to the subjective view. Thus, other methods employed in any empirical procedure such as in the analysis of the school-work transition capture data about the subjective view. We use the method of the self-confrontation interview in which the participants are shown video recording of their actions and asked about their thoughts, feelings, and sensations as well as any other comments they might have (Young, Valach, Dillabough, Dover, & Matthes, 1994). The use of what we consider adequate methods for analyzing subjective processes would need to be determined consensually in an interdisciplinary project.

9. Systematic observation integrates subjective perspective and social meaning.

Neither naïve observation nor the self-confrontation interview provides enough information for a comprehensive analysis of the target processes. Thus, systematic observation complements these methods. All three procedures have to be understood as a part of a contextualizing empirical method. Systematic observation as we employ it in our analysis of goal-directed processes is rooted in shared social meaning, on the one hand, and also uses subjective concepts, on the other. An example of this is using actions as units of analysis which are based on socially shared everyday thinking.

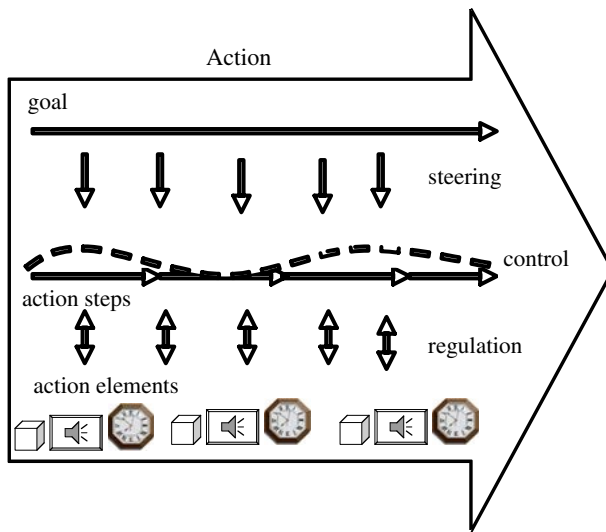


Figure 2 Organization of action

In systematic observation, contextual action theory researchers further assume the subjective cognition of a goal in order to delineate this action as a unit of analysis. As systematic observation is conducted at the three levels of action organization, it requires first, socially defined observational units to cover the actions and goals at the highest level, second, functionally defined observational units to capture the action steps at the middle level of the action organization, and, third, structurally and physically defined observational units at the lowest level. The complementing model is depicted in Figure 2. The action is defined by the goal at the top level of the action organization which is responsible for the steering of action. The action steps defined in a functional way cover the control processes at the middle level, and at the lowest level the regulation processes are found. The observation at this level utilizes structurally defined observational units. The data obtained in this way provide comprehensive information about the defined action (Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005; Valach, Young, & Lynam, 2002). Contextual action theory researchers would appreciate researchers from other disciplines developing a comparable conceptualization of data collection.

10. Action theory informed conceptualization distinguishes among actions, projects and career as forms of goal-directed processes.

Action theory distinguishes among a short-term action lasting several minutes, like a part of a vocational guidance encounter, a mid-term project lasting days, weeks and months, and a long-term career. The analyzed action has to be understood in the context of projects and career (Figure 3). Thus, dealing with the issue of school-work transition, which has relevance for career, we analyze projects that are performed through a series of specific actions (Young, Valach et al., 2001).

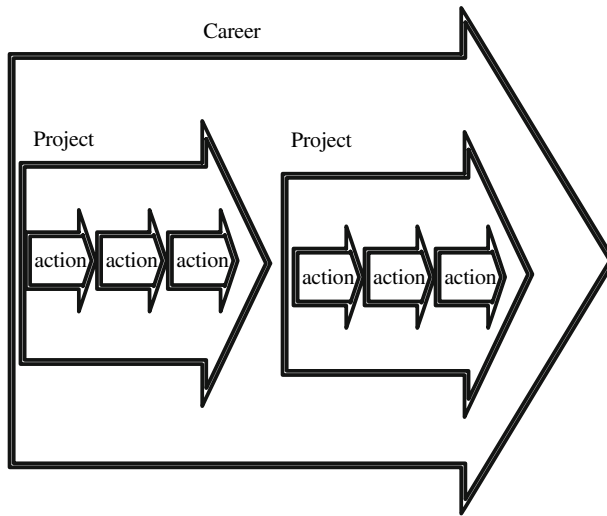


Figure 3 Action, project and action systems

Researchers from other disciplines focusing on the joint understanding of these processes would facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation.

11. Actions, projects and careers are joint processes.

It is crucially important to consider all goal-directed processes as joint processes, thus clearly marking a position that distinguishes contextual theory from theories that identify agency and actions with individualism. Although notions of joint intention, collective action, shared goal or group action are not new, they still need to be redefined frequently, because the most popular application of this thinking often considers the group as an acting unit or the family as a system. However, the concept of joint goal-directed actions, projects, and careers, based on joint goals, is a paradigm that is different from the individualistic approach. Equally important is to stress that action is neither solely rational nor purposeful; nor is it an individualistic construct devoid of any relational and contextual notions. It is interesting to note that with growing globalization and migration, the notion of cultural spaces that impact on life is often replaced by the concept of joint goals in actions, projects and careers that often are related to cultural issues. And so, a trans-generational career of cultural transition becomes equally important as is the culture for the given context for actions (Young, Ball, Valach, Turkel, & Wong, 2003). Acceptance of the conceptualization of joint processes would be helpful in an interdisciplinary project.

12. Young and colleagues (Young, Valach et al., 2001, Young et al., 2006, 2007) studied the school-work transition and career as joint processes in parent-adolescent joint projects using methodology of systematic monitoring, self-confrontation of interactions in the projects, and naive observation by defined groups.

In addressing these issues, the authors and their colleagues formulated a contextual action theory of career and school-work transition. We studied these processes as family career-related joint actions and projects. Based on this research, we know that actions and projects represent the conceptual order in which we can organize the encounter with family members, who would understand it because it contains a good deal of their everyday thinking. We also know that family members used the contextual action-project conceptualization in providing narratives of these joint school-work transition projects. We also know that parents and adolescents constructed their joint actions related to the school-work transition issue as a part of the school-work transition project. Finally, it is understood that in an action-project framework parents and adolescents would organize their further activity in a comparable way and so work further on the family vocational career-related projects and actions. As we maintain that projects and career are embodied, materialized and constructed in ongoing joint actions, such joint actions and projects are our primary sources of data.

Young and collaborators invited people in school-work transition, such as young people and their parents, to discuss some of their pertinent issues, and video-record the event. Immediately after the discussion, the participants were shown the recordings in individual sessions and asked, following each meaningful video-recorded segment, about their thoughts, feelings and impressions as well as about any other information they might like to add. Guidance professionals distil systems of joints actions and projects based on joint goals displayed in the recorded sequence. This finding was then discussed with the participants, and this process is monitored over a period of several weeks or months. The monitoring consisted of regular individual logbook entries made by the participants as well as telephone interviews initiated by the guidance researchers. The joint session at the end of the period proceeded in the same way as the first and reflected a number of changes. As a result, a family school-work transition project can now be outlined.

Enormous conceptual and practical work on the school-work transition has been reported in numerous studies. Of particular interest is the work of Blustein and colleagues (Blustein et al., 2002), who dealt with the class issue in this process and of Bynner and Parsons (2002), who addressed the issue of social exclusion,

School-work transition has also been formulated and analyzed from various theoretical angles (Herr, 1999), including the learning theory perspective (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999), the social cognitive view (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999), the developmental perspective (Savickas, 1999) and the person-environment fit theories (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Some shortcomings of these theories have been indicated by Brown (2000).

Consequently, the disciplines that have been invited to participate in the conceptualization and study of such family school-work transition projects can be scrutinized with respect to their ability to contribute to the understanding and description of such projects. Contextual action theory informed researchers are interested in disciplines that help in recognizing the joint goal-directed processes of which a family school-work transition project is a part. These processes can be institutional, organizational, cultural, economic, or educational. An analysis of the educational institution in which clients are involved, in terms of its organizational

development, provides a backdrop for the organizational goal-directed processes of the client's transition. Equally, to understand school-work transition in a particular area or state where the economy is in transition from manufacturing to services within one generation, researchers would like to enhance their knowledge through economic and social analysis of these processes. Many of the participants in such a process see their activities as part of these change facilitating projects, and thus their understanding of this particular economy is important. Should one of the relevant careers in which the client participates be a cultural trans-generational transition (migrants and children of migrants), an outline and analysis of such a transition would be very helpful from a cultural, economic, sociological, and political point of view. We often do not know what it means, over several generations, to transit from one country or culture to another. We often operate with comparisons based on population incomes, which might be irrelevant and misleading.

It is necessary to provide models for policy makers to help them coordinate their attempts to address ongoing processes and their various interpretations. Approaches that emphasize the self-actualization of school leavers or the human resources of the labour force cannot satisfactorily address the issue. Self-actualization is often seen in individualistic terms, and supplying the labour force for today's industry might cause a shortage for tomorrow's economy. Not very helpful are concepts of structural deprivation, on the one hand, and the move towards the population mean in the case of migrants, on the other. It is like stating that the only running distance is a mile and that neither 100 m races or marathons are allowed. In doing this, we can compare everybody in terms of how far he or she still needs to run. Comparing the "still to run" distance in a 100 m event and in a marathon is misleading.

Some of the sociological, culture anthropological, public health, and educational disciplines provide very useful information. Equally welcomed are disciplines that help us to identify resources for these joint projects, including financial, community, health, genetic, neurological, psychiatric, cultural, and environmental. It is interesting to note that counselling research does not provide much information on the neuropsychology of decision making, although career counselling models are full of decision conceptualizations. Counsellors also shy away from studying emotional and traumatic barriers; thus leaving psychiatrists and psychotherapists to address young people's career wishes. Designing a school-work transition model which both respects given neuropsychological resources and outlines the family group processes might be helpful in facilitating such a transition. It is important to engage colleagues from these disciplines in the conceptualization of clients' joint projects and career. The specific support of clients' goal-directed processes is the most promising in a humanistic and economical sense. Again, the language of action rather than of deficits is required.

Next to the vocation-related studies on career-related family projects, Young and colleagues also studied family health promotion projects providing some of the examples of an interdisciplinary work between vocational counsellors, health counsellors, health psychologists and preventive medicine (Valach et al., 2002; Young et al., 2000, 2001; Valach, Young, & Lynam, 1996).

The contextual action theory approach is also rooted in a number of disciplines. Psychology, social psychology, counselling psychology, environmental psychology,

philosophy, educational sciences, family studies, cultural anthropology, phenomenology, semiotics, sociology, systems theory, communication theory, psychotherapy, economics, neurosciences, political science, social work, law and many others are the disciplines in which similar thoughts have been formulated and upon which contextual action theorists built in developing this approach. However, as indicated above, we scrutinized the specific contributions of these disciplines in order to facilitate further interdisciplinary projects. Fortunately, many approaches within these disciplines employ the conceptualization of goal-directed processes, of systemic organisation, of integrative and contextual conceptualization including the stance of constructionism and, thus, such interdisciplinary work is possible. Over the years contextual action theory research teams have included educational scientists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, physicians, psychiatrists, neurologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and social scientists.

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